



NAACP

Howard County Branch

#7020

**WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE
CHAIRMAN ANNE R. KAISER
HOUSE BILL 1189**

MADAM CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE. IT IS A PLEASURE TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT TO TODAY. MY NAME IS WILLIE FLOWERS AND I AM THE PRESIDENT OF THE NAACP MARYLAND STATE CONFERENCE BUT I ALSO SERVE IN THE CAPACITY OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE HOWARD COUNTY BRANCH NAACP.

BECAUSE OF MY DUAL ROLES WITH THE NAACP THIS SPECIFIC PIECE OF LEGISLATION HAS CAUSED SOME COMPLICATIONS AND THIS IS WHY. AS A STATE ORGANIZATION THE NAACP UNDER MY LEADERSHIP HAS GIVEN OUR NOW 25 BRANCHES AUTONOMY TO MAKE DECISIONS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL TO DETERMINE WHAT IS BEST FOR THEM IN REGARD TO SRO'S. WE KNOW THAT EACH BRANCH HAS DIFFERENT RELATIONSHIPS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS THROUGHOUT THE STATE AND THEY CAN BEST DETERMINE WHAT IS GOOD FOR THEIR LOCAL JURISDICTIONS.

IT HAPPENS THAT I LIVE IN HOWARD COUNTY WHERE THIS LEGISLATION IS WRITTEN TO IMPACT. THE POSITION OF THE HOWARD COUNTY BRANCH NAACP UNFAVORABLE AS IT PERTAINS TO HOUSE BILL 1189 AS WRITTEN. FIRST, I DON'T THINK THIS MANAGEMENT DECISION SHOULD HAVE BEEN RAISED TO THE LEVEL OF BEING A POLITICAL DECISION TO BE DECIDED BY MEMBERS OF THIS BODY OR THE HOWARD COUNTY DELEGATION. THE DECISION TO SECURE SCHOOLS SHOULD BE SPECIFICALLY LEFT TO BOTH HOWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND THE RELEVANT HOWARD COUNTY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WHO ARE PAID TO LEAD. THE LIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD NOT BE DECISIONS TO BE MADE UNDER PRESSURE FROM POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS REGARDLESS OF HOW ORGANIZED THEY ARE.

I SHOULD ADD HERE THAT I AM A MEMBER OF THE HOWARD COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT'S OPERATING BUDGET REVIEW COMMITTEE, DIVERSITY EQUITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE, THE AREA ATTENDANCE COMMITTEE WHICH

DETERMINED REDISTRICTING AND CURRENTLY HAVE TWIN SONS IN 8TH GRADE.

LONG BEFORE THE THE EXCITEMENT OF THIS ISSUE BEGAN THE HOWARD COUNTY BRANCH NAACP PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE AND I TOURED INTERVIEWED AND RESEARCHED AS MANY DETAILS AS POSSIBLE ABOUT THE HOWARD COUNTY SECTION OF COMMUNITY POLICING AND I CAN TELL YOU THEY RUN A PROFESSIONAL SHOP. I WOULD CONSIDER THEM THE BEST AT WHAT THEY DO AND I WILL PUT THEM UP AGAINST ANY FORCE OF ITS SIZE IN THE STATE OR NATION.

HOWEVER, POLICING WITH SO MANY PERSONALITIES AT THE MICRO LEVEL IS NOT WITHOUT PROBLEMS. THE HISTORY OF SYSTEMIC RACISM AND WHITE SUPREMACY IS REAL. BECAUSE OF THAT THE PRACTICE OF POLICING SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS SHOULD END. RATHER, THE OPPORTUNITY THAT SHOULD BE CREATED IS FOR HOWARD COUNTY LEADERS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF BEING NOT JUST FOR SECURITY AND PROTECTION IN CRISIS BUT FOR OFFICERS TO BE TRAINED AS AN DELIBERATE OR PLANNED EXTRA COMPONENT OF THE HUMAN SERVICES STRUCTURE OF SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE. THIS WILL EMBRACE MUCH OF WHAT LAW ENFORCEMENT CURRENTLY DOES AND WILL BUILD TRUST BETWEEN THE COMMUNITY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT THAT IS NEEDED AND THE SCHOOLS BENEFIT. A COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY COLLABORATION, UNDERSTANDING AND VALUING THE LIVES OF OTHERS IS WHAT WILL DISMANTLE WHITE SUPREMACY RACISM.

LOOK, THERE ARE BROKEN STRUCTURES AS IT PERTAINS TO SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH AND THAT IS A PROBLEM THAT WE ALL HAVE TO WORK TO CORRECT. IT IS ALSO REASON WE HAVE CRIME AND HAVE DEPLOYED POLICE TO SCHOOLS IN THE FIRST PLACE. THIS DOESN'T MEAN THAT ANY ONE PERSON IS RIGHT OR WRONG. WHAT IT DOES MEAN IS THAT WE HAVE TO CONTINUE TO WORK TOGETHER AND ALLOW ALL VOICES TO BE HEARD ON THIS MATTER. WE DON'T WANT THE CHILDREN TO BE VICTIMS OF HUNGER, WE DON'T WANT THEM TO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO NEEDED MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS IF THEY NEED IT AND ALSO DON'T WANT STUDENTS TO BE MISUNDERSTOOD IF THEY COME TO SCHOOL IRRITABLE IF THEY ARE HUNGRY AND HAVE A CRISIS AT ANY LEVEL. HOWEVER, IF A SITUATION LIKE THIS HAPPENS I HAVE MET THE OFFICERS WHO HAVE MITIGATED THESE TYPES OF OCCURENCES FROM BEING CLASSROOM DISTRACTIONS.

FINALLY, DURING THIS TIME IN HISTORY WITH QANON MEMBERS WHO LIVE IN HOWARD COUNTY, 2 WHO TOOK PART IN THE TERRORISTS ATTACK ON THE CAPITOL. ONE A 22 YEAR OLD AND 1 THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY. I SHOULD ADD HERE THAT ON OR AROUND JANUARY 6, 2021 SOME SICK COWARD VANDALIZED THE SCHOOL DISTRICT BY CRASHING WINDOWS AND RUNNING AWAY. THE PERSON IS YET TO BE APPREHENDED TO MY KNOWLEDGE AND AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED IS AT-LARGE AND A THREAT TO ANY SCHOOL OR PROGRAM AT A SCHOOL IN HOWARD COUNTY.

SO, THE SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS ROLE IS NOT THE PROBLEM. POLICING IS THE PROBLEM AND IF THERE IS A PROBLEM WITH OVER-POLICING THEN THAT IS A MATTER OF TRAINING. THESE OFFICERS ARE PROFESSIONALS SO ENHANCED TRAINING CAN INCLUDE HOW THEY PARTNER WITH THE COMMUNITY MOVING FORWARD TO BE A RESOURCE FOR FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOLS. IT WILL ALSO BE PRUDENT TO DEFINE WHOLESAL MANAGEMENT OF GUIDANCE TO THE VARIOUS HUMAN SERVICE NETWORK THAT ARE AVAILABLE BUT USUALLY ACCESSED DURING A CRISIS SITUATION. WITH TRAINING SRO'S CAN BE USED TO MITIGATE CHALLENGES AS I KNOW THEY HAVE DONE WITHOUT TRAINING.